National Archives and Records Administration

The administrative records of the National Archives and Records Administration include nearly 12 cubic feet relating to the transfer, processing, and servicing of assassination-related records.

U.S. Secret Service

The Secret Service case file on the assassination of President Kennedy consists of approximately 5 cubic feet. Almost all of the materials in the Secret Service files are duplicated in the records of the Warren Commission.

Other Executive Branch Records

The Collection currently includes a small number of executive branch documents from the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Civil and Civil Rights Divisions of the Department of Justice, the U.S. Information Agency, the U.S. Air Force, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the National Park Service, and the Office of Management and Budget.

Donated Historical Materials

In addition to the Federal records described above, the Collection also contains a variety of donated historical materials. These include the Dallas Police Department case file on the assassination and personal and Presidential papers from the Herbert Hoover, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter Presidential libraries. The Lyndon Johnson materials include transcripts of his telephone conversations with J. Edgar Hoover, Richard Russell, and others concerning issues relating to the assassination, such as the establishment of the Warren Commission.

The JFK Collection Database

In addition to establishing the physical Collection, the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act mandated the creation of an electronic index to those documents not open and available at the National Archives when the legislation was signed into law. Each agency with custody of assassination-related material entered information about its own records into the system. Eventually, all the electronic entries will be transferred to the National Archives. It is possible to search the system in a variety of ways, including by subject, date, and agency creating the record. The Act also required that each index entry (called a Record Identification Form) be printed and attached to the described document.

Access to the JFK Collection

Records in the JFK Collection may be viewed in the research rooms at the National Archives, and copies of specific records may be ordered through the mail. Requests for additional information regarding the Collection should be directed to the JFK Liaison, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408.

General Information Leaflet 42
National Archives and Records Administration
Washington, DC 20408

John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection

The Law

John F. Kennedy was killed on November 22, 1963. Almost 30 years later, hoping to allay lingering doubts about the circumstances surrounding that event, Congress enacted the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act. On October 26, 1992, President George Bush signed the bill into law (PL 102-526). One provision of the law mandated that all assassination-related material be housed in a single collection in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The clear intent of the law was to open most of the records for research.

The Act defines five narrow categories of information whose release can be postponed but also establishes an independent Presidential Review Board to consider all agency decisions to postpone the release of records. Records initially postponed by an agency remain in the custody of that agency until the Review Board can evaluate those records and decisions. Once the Board completes its review of the agency's recommendations for postponement, all records, including those that are closed, will be transferred to NARA. The Act requires that all assassination-related records be opened by 2017, with the exception of documents certified for continued postponement by the President.

On December 28, 1992, the National Archives established the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection. Initially, the Collection consisted only of open assassination-related material already in the custody of NARA. Additions are being made as agencies complete their reviews and transfer newly opened records to the National Archives, but the Collection may not be complete for several years.

The Collection

The Federal Government created assassination-related records for a variety of reasons. A few agencies maintained information before November 22, 1963, on individuals later linked with the assassination. Many agencies gathered and created records immediately following the assassination in pursuit of investigations or ongoing business. Still more assembled material in response to the five formal commissions or committees established to investigate various aspects of the assassination or related subjects. Records reflecting all of these functions comprise the JFK Assassination Records Collection.

Currently, the largest series of assassination-related records in the Collection were created by the two formal investigations into the assassination: the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy (commonly called the Warren Commission) and the House Select Committee on Assassinations. In addition to these two, three other groups conducted inquiries into activities of the intelligence community during the 1960's, and some of the records from these inquiries are assassination-related.

Presidential Commissions

The Warren Commission

President Johnson created the Warren Commission 7 days after the assassination, and 10 months later, the Commission issued its report. The Collection contains 363 cubic feet of Warren Commission records. These records include transcripts of hearings; administrative and investigative documents created by the Commission's staff; documents sent to the Commission by U.S., State, and foreign government agencies; letters from members of the public; photographs; films; and several three-dimensional objects.

The Rockefeller Commission

Gerald Ford created the Commission to Investigate Central Intelligence Agency Activities Within the United States (commonly called the Rockefeller Commission) in 1975. Approximately 2,500 pages of the Commission's records relate to the Kennedy assassination. These documents include information concerning attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro.

Congressional Committees

The House Select Committee on Assassinations

The House of Representatives established the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1976 to reopen the investigation of the assassination in light of allegations that previous inquiries had not received the full cooperation of Federal agencies. The Committee, which also investigated the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., issued its report on March 29, 1979. Included in the records of the Committee's investigation of the Kennedy assassination (approximately 325 cubic feet) are interviews; transcripts of testimony; outside contact reports; materials from the Departments of State and Justice as well as from the CIA and local law enforcement agencies; personal income tax returns; medical records; unsolicited mail; telephone company records; autopsy reports; and the Committee's own administrative files.

Other Investigations

In 1975, Congress created the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (the *Church Committee*) and the House Select Committee on Intelligence (the *Pike Committee*). Some of the records generated by these Committees relate to the assassination.

Executive Branch Agency Records

Many executive branch agencies created records that relate in some way to the assassination, and the Collection contains agency documents of varying volumes, formats, and subjects.

Central Intelligence Agency

Documents transferred to the Collection by the Central Intelligence Agency consist of Lee Harvey Oswald's personality file (approximately 21 cubic feet). Records assembled by the CIA for the House Select Committee on Assassinations are among the records of that Committee.

Department of Justice

The Criminal Division of the Department of Justice transferred approximately 30 cubic feet relating to the assassination. These records include official mail, primarily between the Department and the FBI or the Department and Congress, and letters received from the public.

Department of State

Records transferred from the Department of State (approximately 12 cubic feet) include 2 lot files that relate primarily to Lee Harvey Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union. Much of this material is duplicated in the records of the Warren Commission.